



SAN JUAN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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POLICY/PROCEDURE/INTERPRETATION

QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL FOR GEOLOGICALLY HAZARDOUS AREAS

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ISSUE: Is a professional engineer (P.E.) with a “civil” endorsement a “qualified professional for geologically hazardous areas” ?

San Juan County Code SJCC 18.20.170 defines a qualified professional for geologically hazardous areas as follows:

“Qualified professional” means a person with training and experience in the pertinent scientific discipline. With regard to critical areas, it means a person who is a qualified scientific expert in accordance with WAC 365-195-905. A qualified professional must be licensed and/or certified where such licensing or certification are required. When certification is not required the professional must have: (1) obtained a B.S., B.A., or equivalent degree in biology, engineering, environmental studies, fisheries, geomorphology, or related field, and (2) have at least five years of related work experience.

3. Geologically Hazardous Areas. A qualified professional for a geological hazard is: (a) a geotechnical engineer, qualified civil engineer, or certified engineering geologist; (b) with experience analyzing geologic, hydrologic, and groundwater flow systems and slope stability, seismicity, faulting and liquefaction; and (c) is licensed to practice in the state of Washington. When the proposed development or vegetation removal is located in an area subject to coastal geomorphological processes, the professional shall have demonstrated experience in evaluating and providing technical recommendations related to sediment and sediment transport, and effects on property and shoreline stability.

POLICY/INTERPRETATION: Clearly, under the definition, a P.E. license with a “civil” endorsement alone is not sufficient to be considered a “qualified professional for geologically hazardous areas”, as the terms “geotechnical engineer” and “*qualified* civil engineer” are specifically listed.

The terms “geotechnical engineer” and “qualified civil engineer” are not defined in San Juan County Code and there is not a specified state license for either of these terms as required under SJCC 18.20.170(3) item (c). There is a state license for “Engineering geologist”. The state

provides a license for a “Professional Engineer”, with several endorsements. One such endorsement is “Civil”, another endorsement is “Environmental Engineering”.

When a certification is not required, a qualified professional must have a B.S., B.A. or equivalent degree in a field associated with geologically hazardous areas and at least five years of related work experience.

For the purposes of this section, a “Geotechnical Engineer” is defined as a P.E. with the following qualifications:

- Certification in “Geotechnical Engineering” from the American Society of Civil Engineers,

OR

- A B.S., B.A., or M.S. in Geotechnical Engineering or Geological Engineering and five years of experience evaluating geologically hazardous areas. If working with property on the shoreline, demonstrated coursework and experience evaluating coastal geologic processes.

For the purposes of this section, a “Qualified Civil Engineer”, is defined as a P.E. with the “Civil” endorsement and/or the “Environmental Engineering” endorsement and the following qualifications:

- Certification in “Coastal Engineering” from the American Society of Civil Engineers.

OR

- A B.S., B.A., or M.S. in Geology, Geomorphology, Coastal Geology or Earth Sciences and five years of professional experience evaluating geologically hazardous areas. If working with property on the shoreline, demonstrated coursework and experience evaluating coastal geologic processes.

Exception: A professional engineer with a “Civil” or “Environmental Engineering” endorsement is a qualified civil engineer for the purposes of evaluating Category II a. Erosion hazard areas characterized by soils identified in the USDA Soil Survey of San Juan County, Washington, as having a high risk of erosion, with a land capability subclass of “e” pursuant to SJCC 18.35.060(D)(2)(a) on non-shoreline properties.

18.20.170 “Q” definitions.

“Qualified professional” means a person with training and experience in the pertinent scientific discipline. With regard to critical areas, it means a person who is a qualified scientific expert in accordance with WAC 365-195-905. A qualified professional must be licensed and/or certified where such licensing or certification are required. When certification is not required the professional must have: (1) obtained a B.S., B.A., or equivalent degree in biology, engineering, environmental studies, fisheries, geomorphology, or related field, and (2) have at least five years of related work experience.

1. Wetlands. A qualified wetlands professional is a person who has an understanding of hydrology and advanced skills in plant identification and soils classification, has been trained in the procedures of the 1987 (federal) Wetland Delineation Manual and its updated Regional Supplement, has used those procedures to delineate a wetland, and has obtained wetland permits or worked for a qualified professional who has obtained wetland permits from the Washington State Department of Ecology or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers within the last seven years, and has the qualifications to conduct wetland studies and make recommendations for wetland mitigation. These qualifications include specialization in wetland soils, botany, or hydrology, with appropriate education and experience.

2. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas. A qualified professional for habitat must have a degree in biology or a related degree and professional experience related to the subject species.

4. Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas. A qualified professional for critical aquifer recharge areas means a hydrogeologist, geologist, engineer, or other scientist with experience in preparing hydrogeological assessments. (Ord. 26-2012 § 15; Ord. 2-1998 Exh. B § 2.3)